

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 AGRE-00 COME-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 OES-06 PC-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01
/080 W

----- 064859 /10

P R 170927Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4444
INFO AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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JOINT STATE AID MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, RW
SUBJECT: RWANDA APPEALS FOR EMERGENCY FOOD RELIEF

REF KIGALI 986

1. SUMMARY - FONMIN TOLD ASSEMBLED DIPLOMATS AND AID REPS THAT
CROP LOSSES DUE TO SEPT-NOV DROUGHT WILL AMOUNT TO NEARLY
ONE QUARTER OF NORMAL PRODUCTION, AND HE APPEALED FOR EMERGENCY
FOOD RELIEF PROGRAM ALONG LINES OF THAT MOUNTED BY FOREIGN
DONORS IN 1974-75. WE AGREE THAT A FOOD CRISIS LOOMS EARLY
NEXT YEAR, BUT WE SUSPECT IT WILL NOT BE OF THE MAGNITUDE
PROJECTED BY GOR. PENDING COMPLETION OF OUR OWN SURVEY
(IN ABOUT TWO WEEKS), WE HOPE TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON
POSSIBILITIES OF EXPLOITING AND REDISTRIBUTING STOCKS
AVAILABLE LOCALLY OR IN NEARBY COUNTRIES. WHEN MORE
FACTS ARE IN, WE WILL PROVIDE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
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USG ACTION. END SUMMARY

2. FONMIN NSEKALIJE CONVENED DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND IO REPS
YESTERDAY MORNING TO HEAR HIS FORMAL APPEAL FOR EMERGENCY
FOOD ASSISTANCE TO OFFSET MAJOR CROP LOSSES SUFFERED IN
RECENT MONTHS (REFTEL). ACCORDING FONMIN, USUAL RAINS

ARRIVED LATE OR NOT AT ALL DURING SHORT RAINY SEASON (SEPT.-NOV.) CAUSING CROP FAILURES IN VIRTUALLY EVERY CORNER OF RWANDA. NATIONWIDE, GOR ESTIMATES LOSSES OF ALMOST 49,000 TONS OF MAJOR FOOD CROPS, OR ABOUT 1/4TH OF THE CURRENT HARVEST. SPECIFICALLY, LOSSES ARE ESTIMATED AS FOLLOWS: BEANS - 21,527 TONS; PEAS - 6,995 TONS; PEANUTS - 2,085 TONS; CORN - 10,191 TONS; SWEET POTATOES - 8,163 TONS; TOTAL - 48,961 TONS.

3. TO COMPOUND MATTERS, SHORTFALL IN FOOD PRODUCTION IS EXPECTED TO RESULT IN SEVERE SHORTAGES OF SEEDS FOR NEXT PLANTING SEASON WHICH BEGINS FEB 1977. FONMIN ESTIMATED SEED SHORTAGES AS FOLLOWS: BEANS - 2,122 TONS; PEAS - 240 TONS; PEANUTS - 191 TONS; CORN - 103 TONS; TOTAL - 2,656 TONS.

4. WITHOUT MUCH MORE INTRODUCTION, FONMIN THEN APPEALED TO POTENTIAL DONORS TO MAKE RWANDA'S PLIGHT KNOWN TO THEIR RESPECTIVE CAPITALS AND SEEK WHATEVER FOOD RELIEF MIGHT BE AVAILABLE. CITING 1974-75 FOOD CRISIS AS PRECEDENT, FONMIN SAID HE ASSUMED DONROS WOULD ORGANIZE SIMILAR COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON THEIR SIDE TO INTERFACE WITH GOR DISASTER COMMITTEE NOW BEING FORMED. HE ADDED THAT FORMAL NOTE ENCLOSING "TECHNICAL STUDY" OF FOOD SITUATION AND CONVEYING SPECIFIC REQUEST FOR HELP WOULD BE RECEIVED BY EACH OF US IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

5 OBVIOUSLY PERPLEXED AT FONMIN'S FAILURE TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, EITHER ABOUT FOOD SHORTAGES THEMSELVES OR ABOUT WHAT GOR WAS DOING TO MEET CRISIS, SEVERAL AMBASSADORS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APPEALED TO FONMIN TO PROVIDE MORE DETAILS (I FINALLY PREVAILED UPON HIM AT LEAST TO DISTRIBUTE "TECHNICAL STUDY" TO ASSEMBLY AS A FOCUS FOR OUR QUESTIONS). QUESTIONING MADE IT CLEAR GOR HAS BARELY BEGUN TO GEAR UP TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION AND THAT ITS FIRST ACT WAS TO APPEAL FOR HELP FROM ABROAD. IN REMARKABLY POINTED TERMS, BELGIAN AMBASSADOR TOLD FONMIN IT WOULD BE MOST USEFUL TO US, IN MAKING PITCHES TO OUR CAPITALS, TO BE ABLE TO POINT TO SPECIFIC MEASURES BEING TAKEN BY GOR AND RWANDANS THEMSELVES TO ADDRESS DIFFICULTIES. FONMIN SQUIRMED AND SAID HE WOULD PROVIDE THESE SPECIFICS WHEN OUR RESPECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMITTEES MEET.

6. COMMENT: IT WAS UNFORTUNATELY ALL TOO CLEAR THAT FONMIN HIMSELF HAD NOT DONE MUCH HOMEWORK BEFORE THE MEETING (IN FAIRNESS, HE HAS BEEN AWAY FROM RWANDA FOR PAST WEEK). NOR DID "TECHNICAL STUDY" TURN OUT TO BE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL. WHILE SHORTFALL OF SOME AMOUNT IS EXPECTED BY ALL, DATA

PRESENTED IN STUDY WERE BASED ON ANSWERS TO A LOADED QUESTION PUT TO LOCAL OFFICIALS AROUND THE COUNTRY: HOW GREAT WAS SHORTFALL IN YOUR DISTRICT? STUDY PROVIDED NO INFO ON STOCKS AVAILABLE EITHER IN-COUNTRY OR FROM NEARBY SOURCES. WORTH NOTING MEANWHILE THAT LOCAL MARKET PRICES HAVE REMAINED STABLE SO FAR AND THAT UGANDA (ACCORDING TO WHAT CHARGE TOLD ME) IS ENJOYING A BUMPER CROP OF BEANS NEXT DOOR.

7. OUR INITIAL IMPRESSION IS THAT THERE WILL INDEED BE A PAINFUL FOOD SHORTAGE, ALTHOUGH PROBABLY NOT OF THE MAGNITUDE PROJECTED BY GOR. INTRONICALLY, CRUNCH WILL PROBABLY OCCUR DURING NEXT 4 - 6 MONTHS, AND SECOND GROWING SEASON WILL COMMENCE AND NEW CROPS WILL PROBABLY BE HARVESTED BEFORE MOST OF DEFICIT (WHATEVER IT IS) CAN BE FILLED FROM DISTANT SHORES. WE ANTICIPATE, THEREFORE, THAT MAJOR EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED UPON REDISTRIBUTION OF ANY SURPLUS FOODSTUFFS AVAILABLE LOCALLY (INCLUDING 1100 TONS OF BEANS IN AID-SUPPORTED FSM WAREHOUSES AND ANOTHER 700 TONS OR SO OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOODSTUFFS IN CRS STOCKS) AND UPON PROCURING FOODSTUFFS AND SEEDS FROM NEARBY SOURCES SUFFICIENT TO SEE RWANDA THROUGH UNTIL NEXT HARVEST.

8. AS NOTED REFTTEL, WE WILL HAVE BETTER FIX ON SITUATION AFTER OUR OWN SURVEY, WHICH WE EXPECT TO COMPLETE BY DEC. 31. BY THEN EMBASSY/AID WILL HOPE TO PROVIDE BETTER READING OF SITUATION AND SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USG ACTION, AS WELL AS INFO ON WHAT GOR AND OTHER DONORS UNDERTAKE TO DO. CRIGLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISASTER RELIEF, CROP DESTRUCTION, FOOD ASSISTANCE, DROUGHTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976KIGALI00997
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760466-0573
From: KIGALI JOINT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761234/aaaabcvf.tel
Line Count: 149
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 KIGALI 986
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RWANDA APPEALS FOR EMERGENCY FOOD RELIEF
TAGS: EAID, EAGR, RW, (NSEKALIJE, ALOYS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006